REMARKS

Claims 1-25 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claim 25 is amended. The amendment introduces no new matter. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendment and following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies shown to Applicants' representative by Examiner Choudhury in the July 6 telephone interview. Applicants' separate record of the substance of the interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action, on page 2, rejects claim 25 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Specifically, the Examiner states that he is uncertain how after determining the network address, the method will not result in a single network address designated to different electronic messages. The method by which this is accomplished is discussed in at least paragraphs [0047] and [0060] of the disclosure. When read in conjunction with the specification, claim 25, as amended, is definite.

The Office Action also states that it is uncertain as to whether electronic messages are the same as an e-mail message of claim 1, or if electronic message refers to some other form of internal application messaging. Claim 25 is amended to obviate this portion of the rejection.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claim 25 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, are respectfully requested.

The Office Action, on page 3, rejects claims 1-25 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by "Implementation of a Workflow-based Web Application with an Electronic Signature Mechanism," by Kim, Hyoung Jun et al. (hereinafter "Kim"). This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Kim discloses a process directed toward an extranet based web application permitting registered users of a given VPN (virtual private network) to access pre-screened information

on the server. The system further comprises an electronic signature mechanism for high level decision makers, who are also registered users, to approve draft documents. Kim does not teach all of the features of the pending claims for at least the following reasons.

Contrary to the assertion of the Office Action, Kim does not teach creating an e-mail message to a recipient who does not have access to the workflow system, or providing the recipient access via a link embedded in the email. On the contrary, Kim specifies throughout the reference that the system is designed for registered users of a given VPN (see page 2, left col., line 3; page 2, right col., last paragraph; page 3, left col., last paragraph; page 4, left col., last two paragraphs; page 4, right col., third paragraph).

The Electronic Signature Mechanism of Kim, upon which the Examiner relies, consists of three sub-modules, described on page 4, each of which restrict access based on the unique e-mail addresses and passwords of the users. As such, Kim does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, the feature of creating an e-mail message to the recipient by the user, the recipient who does not have access to the workflow system, as is positively recited in independent claims 1 and 10.

Further, Kim does not teach sending the e-mail message having a link to the determined network address to the recipient, wherein the link provides the recipient with an access to the associated process of the workflow system. Specifically, access to the associated process of the workflow system in Kim is not gained via a link to the determined network address. Rather, the process of Kim first authenticates a user via a unique e-mail address and password and, in certain instances, incorporates a random key within the e-mail, for authentication purposes, along with the URL that is the location of the document in the system. In other words, Kim requires a user authentication based on a registered unique e-mail address, and additional random key information, separate from the URL, to provide access to the associated process of the workflow system.

This analysis also applies to claim 21. In regard to this claim, the Office Action also asserts that selecting the link to access the network address provides access to the workflow process. For the reasons previously discussed regarding claim 1, this assertion necessarily fails.

With regard to claims 3 and 12, the Office Action asserts that Kim teaches the method wherein determining the network address comprises generating the network address. In support of this, the Office Action references page 4, right col., function 3 of Kim. However, this portion of Kim merely states that a linked URL, which is the location of the document in the system, is included in an e-mail. Kim does not address the relevant network addresses being generated, a feature positively recited in at least claims 3 and 12.

This analysis applies as well to claims 4, 5, 13 and 14, that depend on claims 3 and 12, and disclose further features relevant to the generation of the network address. In addressing these claims, the Office Action references a section in Kim that deals with generating an electronic signature key as teaching the generation of network addresses. This assertion is incorrect. Generating an electronic signature key does not correspond to generating a network address.

This argument was presented to the Examiner during the July 6 telephone interview. The Examiner did not rebut this argument. However, the Examiner requested further clarification of this feature upon submission of a formal response. In response to this request, Applicants direct the Examiner's attention to at least paragraphs [0045], [0046] and [0062] of the disclosure.

With regard to claims 8 and 19, the Office Action asserts that Kim teaches a method wherein determining network addresses comprises determining a plurality of different network addresses and embedding a plurality of links into the e-mail message, each link being to one of the plurality of determined network addresses. This assertion is incorrect. Kim

does not teach determining or embedding a plurality of determined network addresses. Kim teaches an approval sequence of higher position persons. Kim does not teach, nor can it reasonably be considered to have suggested, providing multiple links within an e-mail message, each link being to one of the plurality of determined network addresses.

This analysis applies to claims 9 and 20 as well. Kim teaches the use of a single URL that is the location of the document. No plurality of network addresses corresponding to different states of the workflow process is taught, or can reasonably be considered to have been suggested.

This argument was presented to the Examiner during the July 6 telephone interview. The Examiner could not point out any portion of Kim that taught this feature, but suggested that it might be an obvious modification of Kim. However, such a modification would be incompatible with the process of Kim. Specifically, Kim teaches, in regard to the approval sequence, sending the decision maker(s) individual e-mails, specific to certain documents, with individual random keys. As such, careful control of the sequence of approval is achieved. Incorporating multiple links to various stages of the workflow process, with all of the random keys required by Kim, would defeat this purpose, rendering the invention of Kim unsuitable to its intended purpose.

With regard to claim 23, the Office Action asserts that Kim teaches a method for providing access to a workflow process in response to receiving a network address that is associated with the workflow process, comprising: receiving the network address from a user, determining if the user from which the network address is received is a valid user of that network address, and providing access to the user to the workflow process only if user from which the network address is received is determined to be a valid user of that network address. Kim does not teach this process. All open web clients are authenticated via unique e-mail address and password, not by relation to a separate network address.

For at least these reasons, the applied prior art reference cannot reasonably be considered to teach, or to have reasonably suggested, the combinations of all of the features recited in independent claims 1, 10 and 23. Additionally, claims 2-9, 11-20, 24 and 25 are also neither taught, nor would they have been suggested, by the applied prior art reference for at least the respective dependence on these claims directly or indirectly on independent claims 1, 10 and 23, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-25 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

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